

NURSE-LINK CAMPAIGN

**803. Mr M.F. BOARD to the Minister for Health:**

I refer the minister to his statement in the House on 19 September 2002 regarding the \$16.4 million Nurse-Link campaign, and I quote -

Our message will be very much targeted at inviting the thousands of nurses who have left the profession to return to it, particularly those who are considering making a return.

- (1) Will the minister confirm that since the beginning of this year, 677 nurses have returned to employment in public hospitals and health services through Nurse-Link?
- (2) Will the minister also confirm that over the same period, 849 nurses left employment in public hospitals and health services?
- (3) Will the minister now concede that in light of his failure to provide any real incentive to nurses to remain in the public health system, his Nurse-Link campaign, which has cost \$16.4 million for a net loss of nurses, has not resulted in a single additional nurse in the system, apart from those who have come through the universities?

**Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:**

- (1)-(3) Again, the member for Murdoch stands alone. Two people in this State continue to talk down the nursing profession. Those two people are Mr Negative the member for Murdoch, and the Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation, for goodness sake.

Dr J.M. Woollard interjected.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: It appears there are three negative people.

Dr J.M. Woollard: Show him the true statistics.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I know where there is not one.

The department's figures show that 1 005 nurses have been employed -

Mr M.F. Board: That includes university nurses; it is has nothing to do with the Nurse-Link program.

The SPEAKER: Member for Murdoch!

Mr R.C. KUCERA: The department's figures show that 1 005 nurses have been employed since 1 January this year.

Mr M.F. Board interjected.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I cannot believe this. The member for Murdoch cannot work out figures. The February 2001 figure compared with the 2003 figure shows an increase of 428 full-time nurses. This Government has arrested the decline in nursing numbers. People leave and join the nursing profession constantly. In addition, our nursing courses are full, but not because of federal government support. I did not see one extra nursing place in the federal Government's education allocation. It has not provided for one extra place despite the unprecedented demand, because this State has made nursing attractive. Last year, approximately 321 young men and women applied to take up nursing in this State.

Dr J.M. Woollard interjected.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: With some of the examples given in this House by the member for Alfred Cove, it is little wonder nurses do not stay in the profession. In addition, attrition rates have decreased. The public hospital system in this State essentially trains and provides refresher training to almost all the nurses going into and out of the system. At the moment half of the health system in this State is private. I do not resile from the fact that people move into and out of the system. I addressed a breakfast meeting yesterday morning when I was asked many questions by agency groups. One of the agency nurses came up to me and said, "We are hurting because the nurses are going back into the hospitals where they belong." I do not resile from that. The Gallop Government has a very proud record of reinvigorating and returning the nursing profession to the height at which it deserves to be. What do we get from the Opposition? All we ever get is negative carping and whingeing and the putting down of our great nurses. I am very proud of the Gallop Government's record on nursing. The Government set out to do three things; it set out to rebuild and revitalise nursing in this State, improve figures and deal with waiting lists - which are at their lowest level for 11 years. We will deal with one more thing when the new hospitals open; that is, emergency departments. We have achieved two out of three of our objectives, and we are getting there.

The SPEAKER: I call to order the members for Murdoch, Alfred Cove and Kalgoorlie.

